

PBS MACNEIL/LEHRER NEWSHOUR
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INTRODUCTION

LEHRER: Good evening. It was a news day again dominated by the Nicaragua mine story as the House prepared to follow the lead of the Senate in soundly condemning U.S. involvement. Also, that satellite called Solar Max went back into orbit. Retail sales were reported down significantly. And President Reagan again claimed credit for saving the economy. Robin?

MACNEIL: On the Newshour tonight, the furor over U.S. involvement in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors is again our main focus. Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam is here to explain the administration position.

MACNEIL: Last night we showed an extended excerpt from the hearings of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, with members showing the anger at the Reagan administration. Their immediate target was Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam, and he is with us this evening.

MACNEIL: Mr. Secretary, ah, the House resolution that's going to be voted on later this evening calls for a halt to U.S. involvement in the mining. It's been reported that that mining has already stopped and the U.S. involvement in it's stopped, but can you confirm that that is so? KENNETH DAM (Deputy Secretary of State): What has been the practice of a number of administrations, ah, administration officials are not in position to talk about alleged covert action. There is a system for discussing covert action, and I must say that every administration has had a covert action program of one kind or another. That system involves going before the intelligence committees and talking about it there. And that's what I'm left with. So I can't address that question.

MACNEIL: I see. I just wonder why when so many of your fellow senior administration, your fellow senior officials in the administration have been willing to talk to reporters anonymously and confirm in very precise detail or say in very precise detail, spell out the U.S. assistance to this mining process why it is not admitted publicly. DAM: Well, it's a simple fact that there are rules. These rules were established by the Congress. The system for dealing with this was established by the Congress in one of the great reforms of the 1970s, and we're following that system.

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